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## CURIOUS EROSION FEATURE IN WEST TENNESSEE CLAYS

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Recently the writer had occasion to observe a rather odd and striking phenomenon. The clay strata of West Tennessee lie in nearly horizontal beds of unconsolidated sands of the Ripley and Lagrange (Wilcox) formations and are very liable to active erosion. During torrential rains, which are common in this region,

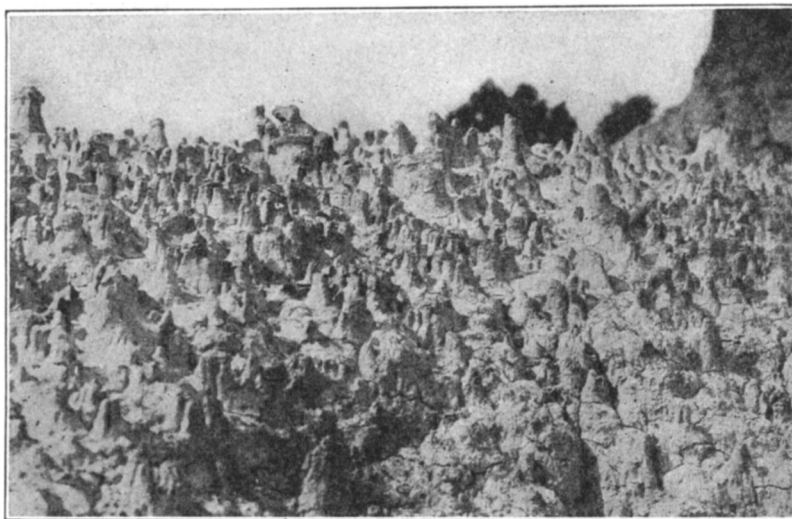


FIG. 1.—Miniature erosion pillars in clay. (Scale, 1 inch = 1 foot.)

small columns are sometimes carved in the surface of the exposed clay. These have been termed “miniature hoodoos” by the writer, for they are in fact small editions of the pillars or “hoodoos” so well known in Monument Park, Colorado, and have the same origin. They are rarely more than six inches high, are circular or elliptical in horizontal section, and generally closely

spaced (15-20 per square foot). Thin fragments of hardpan (feruginous sandstone) commonly form the protective capping and are derived from the overburden. Other substances, such as leaves, bits of wood, and concretions, function in the same way. In short, any small, flat piece of coherent matter will do. These miniature hoodoos are very abundant in this region and are especially characteristic of very plastic clays.